

The University of Chicago

YOUNG'S "NIGHT THOUGHTS" IN RELATION
TO CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN
APOLOGETICS

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED
TO THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF
THE HUMANITIES IN CANDIDACY FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
1931

By
ISABEL ST. JOHN BLISS

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Reprinted from
Publications of the Modern Language Association of America
Vol. XLIX, No. 1, 1934

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II

YOUNG'S *NIGHT THOUGHTS* IN RELATION TO CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS

AN UNDERSTANDING of the purposes and the popularity of Young's *Night Thoughts* is possible only through a realization of their relation to contemporary currents of thought. For the most part critics have confined their attention to the so-called personal element and the treatment of the theme of death, and have neglected perhaps the most outstanding feature of the *Night Thoughts*, the interest in Christian apologetics. Though the nine poems reveal a shift in emphasis and purpose—the first five, of 459, 694, 536, 842, and 1068 lines respectively, chiefly concerned with moral reflections on life and death, and the last four, of 819, 1480, 1417, and 2434 lines, almost wholly devoted to apologetics—there is throughout a fairly definite effort to defend one phase or other of religion. This rationalistic defence of religion places the poems in the current of apologetic literature so outstanding in the late seventeenth and the early eighteenth century. Analysis of Young's aims and arguments will show to what extent he is following those of the outstanding defenders of religion and demonstrate that the *Night Thoughts* are to be considered as largely an expression of contemporary apologetics.

I

Even in the first five Nights, in which the controversial element is less marked than later, Young is opposing the contemporary libertinism, formalism in religion, separation of morality and religion, and deism. In the last four, frankly apologetic, while he continues the earlier defences, and incidentally speaks against the revival of Stoicism, against free-thinking, and the anti-rational view of human nature, he is setting out to defend religion in general on the basis that, as infidelity can be traced to some doubt as to the truth of immortality, to defend that doctrine is the essential point. He brings to his support arguments from human nature, reason, and, especially in *Night IX*, the science and astronomy of the day.

Written defences of religion were by no means new in the late seventeenth century. The Anglican Church had been defended against Roman Catholic criticism by Bishop Jewel in his *Apologia pro Ecclesia Anglicana* (1562), and against the Puritan objections by Richard Hooker in *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*. Baxter had written on the evidences of

Christianity in 1649.¹ Tillotson devoted much of his effort during the Restoration period to refuting Roman Catholicism and atheism.² Towards the end of the century, however, there was a growing feeling that atheism and scepticism were becoming more prevalent,³ and as the deists became more and more outspoken in their attacks on revealed religion, the necessity for Christian apologetics increased.⁴ The work of defending religion became somewhat more organized with the establishment of the Boyle lectures, the general purposes of which apparently influenced other writers.⁵

According to the terms of the will of Robert Boyle, a lecturer was to be chosen annually to preach eight sermons on the evidences of Christianity. The series continued from 1692 to the end of the eighteenth century, though the sermons became less and less significant after about 1740. The general subjects up to 1741 make it evident that the chief problems of the apologists of the time were to refute atheism and deism. While the terms are frequently made to overlap and occasionally to be synonymous, the more careful writers distinguish between them and realize the necessity of quite different arguments against them.

The term *atheist* is frequently used in a rather loose way as the most opprobrious name for any opponent of orthodoxy. There were few writers against whom the apologists were arguing who went so far as to deny God outright. It was felt, however, that the assertion that while God exists it is impossible to know his attributes was practically equivalent to such a denial, for if one can know nothing of God and can affirm

¹ Hunt, *Religious Thought in England*, I, 271.

² Birch, *The Life of the most Reverend Dr. John Tillotson*, . . . 2nd ed. (1753), p. 31.

³ Cf. Robert South, *Sermons* (Philadelphia, 1844), I, 492. "For it is a truth too manifest to be denied, that there have been more innovations upon, and blasphemies against the chief articles of our faith published in this kingdom, and that after a more audacious and scandalous manner, within these several years past, than have been known for some centuries of years before, even those times of confusion both in church and state betwixt forty-one and sixty not excepted: and what this may produce and end in, God only at present knows, and I wish the whole nation may not at length feel" (Sermon of 1694).

⁴ That this challenge to religion was not disregarded may be seen by examining the titles in Arber's *Term Catalogues*, where is listed book after book apparently devoted to showing the unreasonableness of atheism and the truth of natural religion as a basis for Christianity. In 1696 Bentley wrote: "But of all ages since the coming of Christ, I suppose this present has least reason to complain for want of work and employment in defence of Religion." *Eight Sermons Preach'd at the honourable Robert Boyle's Lecture, in the First Year, MDCXCII* (Cambridge, 1724), p. 346.

⁵ Cf. A title listed by Arber for June, 1696: *A Discourse concerning Natural and Revealed Religion: Evidencing the truth and certainty of both, by considerations (for the most part) not yet touch'd by any. Recommended, pursuant to the design of Mr. Boyle's Lecture, to the consideration of Atheists, Deists, and Scepticks; and useful to confirm and nourish the Faith and Piety of others.* By S. N.

nothing of his relations, if any, to man and his world, it is for practical purposes the same as though he did not exist.⁶ It is this belief that explains the great number of writings demonstrating the possibility of knowing the divine attributes and describing them. The denial of the divine creation of the world either by saying it was self-existent and eternal or had arisen as the result of chance was another aspect of atheism which called forth the polemic efforts of many writers. The differences of opinion among the atheists as to the origin of the world and of mankind⁷ were pointed out as evidences of error. The atheists were also supposed to deny the reality of anything but matter,⁸ and to say that there was no fundamental and necessary difference between moral good and evil,⁹ and that religion owed its origin to political considerations.¹⁰ A denial of immortality was also tantamount to atheism, being either the opinion of an out-and-out atheist or of a virtual atheist masking under another name.¹¹ Thus in the apologetic writings of the

⁶ "All those who either are, or pretend to be Atheists; who either disbelieve the Being of God, or would be thought to do so; or, (which is all one), who deny the Principal Attributes of the Divine Nature, and suppose God to be an Unintelligent Being, which acts merely by Necessity; that is, which, in any tolerable Propriety of Speech, acts not at all, but is only acted upon: all men that are Atheists, I say, in this Sense, must be so upon one or other of these three Accounts."—Samuel Clarke, *A Discourse concerning the Being and Attributes of God*, 8th. ed., (London, 1732), pp. 1–2. Cf. John Harris, *Sermon II* (London, 1698), p. 7.

⁷ "The atheists . . . are divided into Sects, and (which is the mark and character of Error) are at variance and repugnancy, with each other and with themselves. Some of them will have mankind to have been thus from all Eternity. But the rest do not approve of infinite Successions, but are positive for a Beginning: and they also are subdivided into three Parties: the first ascribe the origin of men to the Influence of the Stars upon some extraordinary Conjunction or Aspect: others again reject all Astrology; and some of these mechanically produce Mankind, at the very first Experiment, by the action of the Sun upon duly prepared Matter; but others are of opinion, that after infinite blundering and miscarrying our Bodies at last came into this Figure by meer chance and accident."—Bentley, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

"Some have maintain'd, that this world hath thus existed from all Eternity in its present form and condition: but others say, That the Forms of particular worlds are generable and corruptible; so that our present System cannot have sustain'd an infinite Duration already gone and expired: but however, say they, Body in general, the common Basis and Matter of all Worlds and Beings, is self-existent and eternal: which being naturally divided into innumerable little particles or atoms, eternally endued with an ingenit and inseparable power of Motion, by their omnifarious concussions and combinations and coalitions, produce successively (or at once, if matter be infinite) an infinite number of Worlds; and amongst the rest there arose this visible complex System of Heaven and Earth."—*Ibid.*, pp. 223–224.

⁸ Cf. Bentley, *op. cit.*, p. 60, Harris, *Sermons v and VI* (1698), and Clarke, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

⁹ Harris, *Sermon I*, p. 11, and Bentley, *op. cit.*, p. 3. ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

¹¹ Clarke, *op. cit.*, p. 168. But then, having a prejudice against the Notion of the *Immortality of Human Souls*, they believe that Men perish intirely at Death, and that one

period atheism will usually have one or more of the following meanings: a denial of the existence of God; a denial of the possibility of knowing his attributes; a denial of the divine creation of the world; a denial of the reality of anything but matter; a denial of the essential and eternal difference between moral right and wrong; a denial of immortality.

The term *deism* is used in an even looser way to cover all shades of opposition to orthodoxy. Many people regarded it as virtually synonymous with atheism, affirming that the deists concealed their true beliefs—or lack of them—so as to escape the opprobrium of being called atheists.¹² The statement that if any deists are really sincere in saying that they observe all the laws of reason and the obligations of natural religion they will unavoidably be led to accept Christianity, and that if they are not they must "sink into downright Atheism,"¹³ leaves very little room for Deism. Clarke distinguishes four chief types of deists. The first believe in God, some of his attributes, and the divine creation of the world, but deny providence.¹⁴ The second, who believe in God and in his Providence, but deny any difference between moral good and evil, are in reality little better than atheists, and are generally immoral in

Generation shall perpetually succeed another, without anything remaining of Men after their departure out of this Life, and without any future restoration or renovation of things . . . And so upon the whole, this opinion likewise if we argue upon it consistently, must finally recur to absolute Atheism. Cf. Bentley, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

¹² "There are some Infidels among us that not only disbelieve the Christian Religion; but oppose the assertions of Providence, of the Immortality of the Soul, of an Universal Judgment to come, and of any Incorporeal Essence: and yet to avoid the odious name of Atheists, would shelter and skreen themselves under a new one of Deists, which is not quite so obnoxious."—Bentley, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

"Profess'd Atheists can do no great Harm; for all Persons are aware of them . . . But there are few such; they have found a way to pass under a fairer Dress and a softer Name: They pretend to be true Deists and sincere Cultivators of Natural Religion; and to have a most profound Respect for the supreme and Almighty Being; But when this Profound Respect comes to be thoroughly examined and duly understood, it will appear to be the most abominable abuse that can be, and a most wicked and Blasphemous Idea of the Deity. For they make him either nothing but the Soul of the World, Universal Matter, or Natura Naturata, a God that is an absolute necessary agent, without any Rectitude in his will; without any Knowledge, Wisdom, Goodness, Justice, Mercy, or Providence over his Works."—Harris, *Sermon*, vi, p. 10.

¹³ Clarke, *op. cit.*, pp. 158–159.

¹⁴ "Some men would be thought to be *Deists*, because they pretend to believe the Existence of an Eternal, Infinite, Independent, Intelligent Being; and, to avoid the name of Epicurean Atheists, teach also that this Supreme Being made the World: Though at the same time they agree with the Epicureans in this, that they fancy God does *not at all concern* himself in the *Government* of the world, nor has any regard to, or care of, what is done therein. But, if we examine things duly, this opinion must unavoidably terminate in *absolute Atheism*."—*Ibid.*, p. 159.

their lives.¹⁵ They oppose revealed religion and reject the obligations of natural religion, and "despise also the Wisdom of all *Humane Constitutions* made for the order and benefit of Mankind, and are as much contemptners of *Common Decency* as they are of Religion."¹⁶ Their constant weapon against religion and morality is ridicule. The third type of Deists believe in God, in his providence, and to some extent in his moral attributes; but they deny immortality, and in so doing they too should consistently be regarded as atheists.¹⁷ The fourth class believe in God, his moral attributes, his providence, the moral obligations of mankind, future rewards and punishments in a life to come, but they deny divine revelation. They are the only true deists and they are very few in number.¹⁸ It is this type of Deist that Bentley had in mind in his apologetic writings. Thus he says:¹⁹

There are a sort of persons baptized indeed into the Christian Faith, and educated in the profession of it; but in secret, I wish I might say so, nay even openly they oppose and blaspheme it; repudiating at once the whole authority of Revelation, and debasing the Sacred Volumes to the rank of ordinary Books of History and Ethics. The being of God and a Providence they profess to believe, to acknowledge a difference between Good and Evil, to be verily persuaded of another Life to come; and to have their expectations of that state, as their behaviour is in this. Nay even the whole system of Christian morals they can willingly embrace; but not as a collection of divine statutes and ordinances sent us by an express from Heaven, but only as useful rules of life, discoverable to Natural Religion.

Gastrell a bit later represents the Deists as believing in God "an easy merciful Being, that loves his Creatures, and requires no other Service from them than what is agreeable to their Nature and Inclinations,"²⁰ but repudiating the Scriptures,²¹ and future rewards and punishments,²² and having as their main principles to follow nature and to harm no one.²³ A popular view of deism appeared in a periodical devoted to religious questions and was quoted in the *Gentleman's Magazine*:²⁴

¹⁵ "Some others there are, that call themselves Deists, because they believe, not only the Being, but also the Providence of God: that is, that every *natural* thing that is done in the World, is produced by the Power, appointed by the Wisdom, and directed by the Government of God: Though not allowing any difference between *moral Good* and *Evil*, they suppose that God takes no notice of the *morally good* or *evil* actions of Men; these Things depending, as they imagine, merely on the arbitrary Constitution of Human Laws."—*Ibid.*, p. 164.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 167–168.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 169–170.

¹⁹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 347–348.

²⁰ *The Principles of Deism Truly represented, and set in a Clear Light. In two Dialogues between a Sceptick and a Deist* . . . 4th ed. (London, 1726), p. 7.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 77.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

²⁴ *The Weekly Miscellany*, No. 134, as quoted in the *Gentleman's Mag.*, v (1735), 347.

They are indeed sometimes charged as denying the Evidence of Faith in General, and would admit nothing unsupported by Reason and Demonstration. Far from it. As for their Faith, tho' it be not of the same Sort with that of Christians, yet it is far more extensive. You will not admit anything as a proper object of Faith, which contradicts the Principles of Reason and Common Sense. Whereas these Gentlemen can believe in all Cases, the Truth of Religion only excepted, often without any Ground from Reason, nay sometimes against its clearest Dictates. Tho' they are not weak and superstitious enough, to believe in Jesus Christ, the Prophets, and Apostles, yet they can confide in the wonderful Discoveries of Toland, Woolston or Tindal.

To the apologists the term *deist*, then, might mean one who disbelieved one or more of the tenets of Christianity, the moral attributes of God, divine providence, the distinction between good and evil, immortality and future rewards and punishments; but especially it meant a denial of revelation and of the inspiration of the Bible. Whatever the shade of meaning attached, deism was considered as basing itself on human reason alone and receiving only what can be found out by the reason without supernatural assistance.

The names frequently mentioned among the arch atheists and deists—in either category or both—are Hobbes and Spinoza. Bentley in his series of sermons (1692) in confutation of atheism is mainly opposing theories ascribed to them. Kidder in his Boyle lectures of 1694 on the "Demonstration of the Messias" regards them both as deists. Harris in his lectures (1695–96) regards Hobbes as the nearest approach to a genuine atheist and includes Spinoza among those bordering on atheism. Clarke in his first series of lectures (1704) considers them both as outstanding atheists, and in his second series (1705) against deists is still concerned with refuting Hobbes. Hancock, the Boyle lecturer for 1706, classed them both as atheists, as did Brampton Gurdan in 1721–22.

The name of Hobbes especially was one to arouse the orthodox. Any doctrine departing from orthodoxy might be branded with his name. It will be recalled that Tillotson was accused of Hobbism in laying undue emphasis on rationalism to the neglect of the mysterious element in religion.²⁵ But while the name frequently connoted heterodoxy or infidelity or some vague unorthodoxy, there are some outstanding doctrines supposed to have been taught by Hobbes which are regarded by the apologists as weakening the very foundations of religion and morality. The aspect of Hobbes' thought considered perhaps the most dangerous was the denial of the essential and eternal difference between good and evil.²⁶ This disturbed the divines of the late seventeenth century.

²⁵ Birch, *The Life of . . . Tillotson*, pp. 296–297.

²⁶ Cf. *Leviathan*, Ch. XIII.

The second opinion is, that good and evil, honest and dishonest, are originally founded in the laws and constitutions of the sovereign civil power, enjoining some things or actions and prohibiting others . . . This was the opinion heretofore of Epicurus, . . . and lately of one amongst ourselves, a less philosopher, though the greater heathen of the two, the infamous author of the *Leviathan*.²⁷

That virtue and vice are arbitrary things, founded only in the imaginations of men, and in the constitutions and customs of the world, but not in the nature of the things themselves; and that that is a virtue or vice, good or evil, which the supreme authority of a nation declares to be so. And this is frequently asserted by the ingenious author of a very bad book—I mean the *Leviathan*.²⁸

And now . . . 'tis easy to see the Falsity and Weakness of Mr. Hobbes's Doctrines; that *there is no such thing as Just and Unjust, Right and Wrong originally in the Nature of Things*; that *Men in their natural State, antecedent to all Compacts, are not obliged to universal Benevolence nor to any moral Duty whatsoever* . . . And that, *in Civil Societies, it depends wholly upon positive Laws or the Will of Governments, to define what shall be Just or Unjust*.²⁹

Hobbes' picture of man as motivated fundamentally by purely selfish desires led to many efforts to paint human nature in more attractive colors.

His materialism, denying the immateriality of the soul and making it mere thinking and willing matter, with a consequent denial of free will in man, was considered to endanger the foundations of religion.³⁰ His theory that God has dominion over man merely because of his irresistible power and that all right to rule is in proportion to power, with the consequence that the sole reason for men to obey God is that they have not sufficient power not to do so was felt to undermine the basis of moral virtue which is "the Foundation and Sum, the Essence and the Life of all true Religion. . . ."³¹ His conception of religion as having its origin in fear or policy provoked the apologists to a vindication of a religion discovered by reason or revealed by God.³²

While some of the heretical ideas associated with the name of Hobbes are likewise attributed to Spinoza, as the denial of free will,³³ the main accusations against Spinoza are that he believed that there is no distinction of substances and that the material world alone has existential reality, and that God is a necessary agent.

²⁷ South, *Sermons*, I, 337-338.

²⁸ Tillotson, *The Works of . . . containing two hundred Sermons and Discourses, on several Occasions* (London, 1820), I, 418.

²⁹ Clarke, *op. cit.*, pp. 226-227.

³⁰ Cf. South, *op. cit.*, III, 533, Clarke, *op. cit.*, pp. 87, 96.

³¹ Clarke, *op. cit.*, pp. 238-240.

³² Harris, *Sermon III*, "The Notion of a God, Neither from Fear nor Policy." Wilkins, *On the Principles and Duties of Natural Religion*, 4th. ed. (London, 1699), p. 52.

³³ Clarke, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

Spinoza, the most celebrated Patron of Atheism in our Time; who taught that there is no difference of Substances, but that the Whole and every part of the *Material World* is a Necessarily-existing Being; and that there is no other God, but the Universe: . . . ³⁴

It follows evidently, that when they say, God by the necessity of his nature, is the Cause and Author of all Things; they understand him to be a Cause or Agent in no other sense, than if a Man should say, that a stone, by the necessity of its Nature, is the cause of its own falling and striking the Ground: which is really not to be an Agent or Cause at all; But their opinion amounts to this, that all things are equally Self-Existent, and consequently that the material World is God. ³⁵

Occasionally Collins is classed as an atheist. Always his doctrines are repudiated, and reference to his *Discourse of Free-Thinking* is more frequent than to himself. The Boyle lectures for 1713-14 on the subject of free-thinking were suggested by Collins' writing; and here the lecturer, Benjamin Ibbot, like many others, differentiated between true free-thinking and the current use of the term. The *Weekly Miscellany*, No. 96, finds Collins' definition all right but his character all wrong. ³⁶

"A free-thinker, is one who is free, or ready to enquire into the Meaning and Truth of any Proposition that merits an Examination, and to give it all the Consideration which its Nature and Importance requires; and whose Judgment is free, or at Liberty to determine itself as the Evidence shall appear." Thus Mr. Collins defines a Free-thinker, and had his conduct been answerable, his character had been truly valuable.

Shaftesbury too is more frequently alluded to through his doctrines than referred to by name. The chief ideas objected to in his writings are the use of ridicule as a test of truth ³⁷ and virtue as its own reward. ³⁸ His inquiry into the truth of the current belief that an atheist cannot be moral ³⁹ with his conclusion that atheism in itself has nothing to do with determining moral standards ⁴⁰ is directly opposed to the attitude taken in the apologetic writings. The idea that deeds done with the hope of reward or fear of punishment have nothing of virtue about them ⁴¹ caused much justification of the doctrine of rewards and punishments.

Apart from actual argument against atheism one method of defence had long been and continued to be the branding of atheists as irrational, ⁴²

³⁴ Clarke, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 63.—Cf. Spinoza, *Short Treatise on God, Man, and His Well-Being*, Pt. I, Ch. iv, and *Ethic*, Pt. I, Prop. xxxii, xxxiii.

³⁶ Quoted in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, iv (1734), 546-547.

³⁷ *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, 5th ed. (Birm., 1773), I, 61, 128.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, I, 97-98.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, II, 7.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, II, 46.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, II, 55.

⁴² Tillotson, *Sermons*, I, 330, 375-376, III, 216, and Derham, *Physico-Theology* (London, 1798), II, 417.

degenerate and base, and necessarily wicked.⁴³ To refute the theories of atheism the main efforts were to prove the existence of God and to demonstrate his moral attributes, to prove that the world cannot have been the result of chance, to establish the truth of the difference between right and wrong and a necessary connection between morality and religion, and to vindicate the doctrine of immortality. While one or more of these points, especially the last two, might need to be established in the defence of Christianity against Deism, the main efforts were to demonstrate the truth of revealed as well as natural religion and of the inspiration of the Bible.

In proving the existence of God all the old arguments are used. The general belief in a Deity is cited as a proof by various writers.⁴⁴ The ontological argument is used by Harris.⁴⁵

Which way soever we come by our Idea's, we cannot have one of what is absolutely a non-entity; for what is absolutely Nothing, can neither come into us by our Senses, nor be innate in our Minds. And therefore if there were no God, we could never have had any Idea of Him; nor could anyone ever possibly invent, or form such a Notion in his Mind.

The cosmological argument is developed most fully by Clarke in a series of propositions designed to show that something must have existed from eternity and that this something must be an immutable, independent, self-existing being; that the material world cannot have been this being and that its evident dependability demands another self-existent being. This being, of the essence of which we are ignorant, is God.⁴⁶ By far the most commonly used argument is, however, the teleological. While the type of argument is old, the special development is somewhat new, as the fairly recently accepted Copernicanism and the discrediting of the homocentric theory of the universe, together with the scientific discoveries of the seventeenth century, provided fresh details on which to base the argument from design. The object in this kind of arguing is to establish the essential point in natural religion to serve as the basis of revealed, and as such is applicable in confuting atheism but not deism.

Bentley, the first Boyle lecturer, in following Boyle's example of trying to turn the discoveries of science to the interests of religion, at once carried out his design in establishing the lectures and set an example followed by other lecturers and apologists. Dividing his discussion into three main heads, he bases his proofs of the existence of God on the faculties

⁴³ South, *Sermons*, iv, 19, iii, 34-36; Tillotson, *Sermons*, i, 395-398, ii, 475-476; Bentley, *op. cit.*, p. 21; Harris, *Sermon*, i, pp. 8-11.

⁴⁴ Tillotson, *op. cit.*, i, 348-349; Wilkins, *op. cit.*, p. 41; Harris, *Sermon* iii, p. 26.

⁴⁵ *Sermon* iii, p. 19.

⁴⁶ Clarke, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-41.—Cf. Wilkins, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-77.

of the human soul, the structure of the body, and the frame of the world. He sets out to refute the atheists' theory that matter is the only substance, in order to establish the immateriality of the soul and thence to show that the soul must have been created by an immaterial Being, or God. His plan as he outlines it shows the usual method of demonstrating this point.⁴⁷

To confute this atheistical assertion

1. First I will give you a true Notion and Idea of Matter; whereby it will again appear that it has no inherent Faculty of Sense and Perception.

2. I will prove, that no particular sort of Matter, as the Brain and Animal Spirits, hath any power of Sense and Perception.

3. I will show, that Motion in general superadded to Matter cannot produce any Sense and Perception.

4. I will demonstrate that no particular sort of Motion, as of the Animal Spirits through Muscles and Nerves can beget Sense and Perception.

5. I will evince, that no Action and Passion of the Animal Spirits, one Particle upon another, can create any Sense and Perception.

6. I will answer the Atheist's Argument of Matter of Fact and Experience in brute Beasts; which, say they, are allowed to be mere matter, and yet have some degree of Sense and Perception.

These things being shown, he concludes that there is within us "some Incorporeal Substance" and from that derives the idea of a God.⁴⁸

His second argument from the "structure and origin of Human Bodies" is developed at length, introducing the newest anatomical and physiological information of the day. In brief the argument is:⁴⁹

That the organical structure of humane Bodies whereby they are fitted to live, and move, and be vitally informed by the Soul is unquestionably the workmanship of a most wise, and powerful and beneficent Maker.

But a detailed account of the body is felt by its scientific accuracy to add weight to the argument. This same type of reasoning appealed to many writers, either with or without scientific training.⁵⁰ The zeal with which even poets⁵¹ gave themselves to relating the details of the circulation of the blood, the nervous system, etc., shows the interest in new physiological discoveries and the significance attached to them for religious

⁴⁷ Bentley, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-61.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 78. There is therefore an immaterial and intelligent Being that created our Souls; which Being was either eternal itself, or created immediately or ultimately by some other Eternal, that has all these Perfections. There is therefore originally an Eternal, Immaterial, Intelligent Creator; all which together are the attributes of God alone.—Cf. Derham, *op. cit.*, II, 153, and Burnet, *The Theory of the Earth* (London, 1684), p. 301.

⁴⁹ Bentley, *op. cit.*, p. 91. ⁵⁰ Cf. Derham, *op. cit.*, I, 135, and Burnet, *op. cit.*, p. 295.

⁵¹ Cf. Brooke, *Universal Beauty*.

purposes. All evidences of adaptation to purpose and environment were hailed as direct marks of an intelligent Creator. Infirmities and weaknesses in the body were regarded as confirming the Scriptural account of the fall of man.⁵² The various atheistical theories as to the origin of mankind are refuted by showing their lack of scientific soundness,⁵³ with the conclusion that "'twas God, that then created the first seminal forms of all animals and vegetables."⁵⁴

Bentley's third argument from the nature of the world is divided into four parts. His first two points, that the sun and planets could not have existed always as they are, and that matter cannot be eternal, belong with the cosmological arguments for the existence of God. The third part is designed to prove that even though matter were eternal and divided into atoms and though motion were co-existent with it, these atoms could never by chance have formed the universe as it is. The fourth part of the argument is based on the "Order and Beauty of the Inanimate Parts of the World" as evidence of the work of "an intelligent and benign Agent."⁵⁵ It is this last argument that is most commonly used and apparently it appealed to poets through the opportunity given for descriptions of the beauty of the universe, mainly a geometric beauty of harmony but occasionally a physical beauty. In order to show the beauty and harmony of the universe Bentley points out that it is a great error to regard the details of the creation as being designed only for man's advantage, and that it will give a far more glorious conception of God's nature to consider the stars as formed "not merely upon our account to be peeped at through an optic Glass, but for different ends and nobler purposes."⁵⁶ His conception of what constitutes beauty is shown in his defence of mountains and such irregularities of the earth's surface against the charge of being deformities occasioned by the wrath of God at the fall of man.⁵⁷

All Pulchritude is relative; and all Bodies are truly and physically beautiful under all possible Shapes and Proportions; that are good in their kind, that are fit for their proper uses and ends of their Natures.

In arguing from the inanimate works of nature as shown in this world, the emphasis is usually on the evidences of design in the atmosphere⁵⁸ and the characteristics of the earth's surface, and in the indications of an intelligent creator in the great diversity in nature. The idea that "in greater variety, the greater art is seen"⁵⁹ and consequently greater evi-

⁵² Bentley, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-101.

⁵³ Bentley, *op. cit.*, pp. 225-226.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 103-161.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 335.—Cf. Derham, *op. cit.*, I, 115-123.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

⁵⁷ Bentley, *op. cit.*, p. 335.

⁵⁸ "Who would ever say or imagine such a body so different from the globe it serves, could be made by chance, or be adapted so exactly to all those fore-mentioned grand ends,

dence of a divine creator leads to an emphasis of this as a proof of the existence of God. There is then frequent mention of the regular diversity especially in the forms of animals and in the neat gradations of all things in a chain of being.⁶⁰

The nature of the stars, newly opened to the imagination of men through the discoveries of Newton and others, was felt to offer the most convincing evidence of a divine creator. Indeed, in Newton, scientist and theologian, the cause of religion found one of its ablest champions, and in his writings the source of many of its most cogent arguments. Bentley, in his efforts to use the discoveries of science as a basis for his arguments in his Boyle lectures, had evolved an elaborate hypothesis from what he believed to be Newtonian principles, and to the great Newton he turned for confirmation of his theories. In four letters to Bentley, written from December, 1692, to February, 1693,⁶¹ Newton for the most part approved Bentley's teleological arguments for the existence of God, pointing out especially that the diversity of the heavenly bodies shows that the world cannot be the result of chance but must be the work of an intelligent creator.⁶²

SIR: when I wrote my treatise about our system, I had an eye upon such principles as might work with considering men, for the belief of a Deity; and nothing can rejoice me more than to find it useful for that purpose . . .

The same power, whether natural or supernatural, which placed the sun in the centre of the six primary planets, placed *Saturn* in the centre of the orbs of his five secondary planets; and *Jupiter* in the centre of his four secondary planets; and the earth in the centre of the moon's orb; and therefore, had this cause been a blind one without contrivance or design, the sun would have been a body of the same kind with *Saturn*, *Jupiter*, and the earth; that is without light or heat. Why there is one body in our system qualified to give light and heat to all the rest, I know no reason, but because the author of the system thought it convenient . . .

To your second query I answer, that the motions, which the planets now have, could not spring from any natural cause alone, but were impressed by an intelligent agent . . . to make this system, therefore, with all its motions, required a cause which understood, and compared together the quantities of matter in the several bodies of the sun and planets, and the gravitating powers resulting

by any other efficient than by the power and wisdom of the infinite God? Who would not rather, from so noble a work, readily acknowledge the workman and as easily conclude the atmosphere to be made by God, as an instrument wrought by its power, any pneumatic engine to be contrived by man!" Derham, *op. cit.*, I, 36. ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 85.

⁶⁰ Cf. Burnet, *op. cit.*, pp. 291, 298, 306-307. South, *Sermons*, II, 226. Derham, *op. cit.*, II, 206-207.

⁶¹ David Brewster, *The Life of Sir Isaac Newton* (New York, 1831), p. 210.

⁶² *Opera*, IV, 429 ff. quoted by Edwin Arthur Burt, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science* (New York, 1927), pp. 285-286.

from thence . . . and to compare and adjust all these things together in so great a variety of bodies, argues that cause to be not blind or fortuitous, but very well skilled in mechanics and geometry.

Not only in his definitely theological writing did Newton argue in defence of the idea of deity. In his greatest scientific books, his *Principia* (1687), and his *Opticks* (1714), he indicated to a wide circle of eager followers the great apologetic value of his epoch-making astronomical discoveries. The "Scholium Generale" of his *Principia* is largely devoted to teleological arguments for the existence of God and a discussion of his attributes.⁶³ Similarly in his *Opticks* Newton argues from the harmonious motions of the stars moving in concentric circles in contrast to the eccentric motions of the comets that the universe cannot have developed by chance nor by the mere laws of nature, but must have been created by an intelligent agent.⁶⁴

Now by the help of these Principles, all material Things seem to have been composed of the hard and solid Particles above-mention'd, variously associated in the first Creation by the Counsel of an intelligent Agent. For it became him who created them to set them in order. And if he did so, it's unphilosophical to seek for any other Origin of the World, or to pretend that it might arise out of a Chaos by the mere Laws of Nature; though being once form'd, it may continue by those Laws for many Ages. For while Comets move in very excentrick Orbs in all manner of Positions, blind Fate could never make all the Planets move one and the same way in Orbs concentrick, some inconsiderable Irregularities excepted . . . Such a wonderful Uniformity in the Planetary System must be allowed the Effect of Choice.

Such teleological arguments seemed particularly convincing when advanced by the greatest scientist of the day. Probably of equal value to the apologists was the promise of continued aid from science in the future expressed in Newton's statement that as more of the secrets of nature were learned more light would be shed on religious truths.⁶⁵

⁶³ *Elegantissima haecce Solis, planetarum et cometarum compages non nisi consilio et dominio entis intelligentis et potentis oriri potuit. Et si stellae fixae sint centra similium systematum, haec omnia simili consilio constructa suberunt Unius dominio . . .*

Hic omnia regit non ut anima mundi, sed ut universorum dominus . . . Deus summus est ens aeternum, infinitum, absolute perfectum: sed ens utcumque perfectum sine domine non est dominus deus . . . Dominatio entis spiritualis deum constituit, vera verum, summa summum, ficta fictum . . . A caeca necessitate metaphysica, quae utique eadem est semper et ubique, nulla oritur rerum varatio. Tota rerum conditarum pro locis ac temporibus diversitas, ab ideis, et voluntate entis necessario existentis solummodo oriri potest.—Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica (Glasgae, 1822), pp. 199–201.

⁶⁴ *Opticks, or a Treatise of the Reflections, Refractions, Inflections & Colours of Light.* Reprinted from fourth edition (New York, 1931), p. 402.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 405.

And if natural Philosophy in all its Parts, by pursuing this Method, shall at length be perfected, the Bounds of Moral Philosophy will also be enlarged. For so far as we can know by natural Philosophy what is the first Cause, what Power he has over us, and what Benefits we receive from him, so far our Duty towards him, as well as that towards one another will appear to us by the Light of Nature.

Small wonder that the apologists saw a powerful ally in Newton and sought to strengthen their cause by constant appeal to the astronomical material associated with his name and to teleological arguments made powerful through his sanction.

While none of the Boyle lectures is primarily based on the evidence of the stars, one of the lecturers, Derham, published a book devoted to the subject and forming a kind of supplement to his *Physico-Theology* which comprised the Boyle lectures for 1711-12. His *Astro-Theology* (1715),⁶⁶ which might well have served as a textbook for the newest astronomical information, endeavors to draw from the new theories of the plurality of worlds and solar systems evidence of the Deity.⁶⁷ The regularity and harmony of the movements of the stars, and the fact that they are so situated with respect to each other that they do not conflict, show that they could not be the work of chance. The "universality and uniformity of the Figure of the several Globes of the Universe" is regarded as proof of God's workmanship, inasmuch as chance would have made them all of different forms.⁶⁸ Among other details, Saturn's ring apparently adds weight to the arguments, for it is rarely omitted.

Such are the main arguments for the existence of God, many of which also involve arguments against the Epicurean theory of chance. But with regard to the natural and moral attributes for the most part the tendency was to state what the attributes were rather than to attempt to prove that they can be known,⁶⁹ or to say that reason can deduce them

⁶⁶ The full titles of Derham's works indicate the nature of the argument in each: *Physico-theology: or, A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God, from his Works of Creation*, and *Astro-theology: or, A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God, from a Survey of the Heavens*.

⁶⁷ "And as myriads of Systems are more for the Glory of God and more demonstrate his Attributes than one, so it is no less probable than possible, there may be many besides this which we have the privilege of living in."—*Astro-Theology*, pp. xlv-xlv.

⁶⁸ *Op. cit.*, pp. 117-118.—In curious contrast with this theory Derham had seen in the variety in men's faces evidence of divine creation, for chance would have made them all alike.—*Physico-Theology*, II, 206-207.

⁶⁹ Cf. Barrow, *Sermons Preached upon Several Occasions* (London, 1678), pp. 29-31. South, *Sermons*, I, 10, II, 401, IV, 134-135. Tillotson, *Sermons*, VI, 288-289, VI, 294.—Tillotson emphasizes the necessity of thinking of all the attributes of God together and says that the greatest mistakes in religion have arisen from isolating one attribute and building a conception of the Deity on that alone.

without showing how.⁷⁰ There is a difference of opinion as to the relation of the moral attributes, justice, wisdom, mercy, etc., to similarly named virtues in men. On the one hand, it is asserted that the notions we have of such qualities are not strictly applicable to God whose nature is incomprehensible to man, but that we use such terms to characterize him by analogy of the effects of God's attributes as shown in the world.⁷¹ On the other hand, it was maintained or implied that *wise, good*, and so on as applied to God had the same meaning when applied to men.⁷²

While the apologists agree that the nature of God is incomprehensible, they consider that several of his attributes may be known to us and many attempt to prove them. That he is eternal, is demonstrated from the fact that as something must be self-existent, from the necessity of its nature it must likewise be eternal because not affected by anything else.⁷³ God must be infinite and omnipresent, because if he is not infinite there can be nothing infinite, or the effect will be greater than the cause, and being self-existent he must be everywhere.⁷⁴ Similarly the unity of God is to be proved from his necessary self-existence.⁷⁵ The proof of the moral attributes is supposedly of more importance in refuting atheism as these natural attributes are recognized by some so-called atheists. The intelligence of the Divine Being must be demonstrated against the idea of a "blind and unintelligent necessity."⁷⁶ This attribute is variously proved. The intelligence in the world must have come from an intelligent cause.⁷⁷ But the main proof comes from the order and beauty of the world and the wonderful ways in which things are adapted to their ends, and as such is bound up with the teleological argument for the existence of God. The intelligence, wisdom, and power of God are all demonstrated by this same evidence.⁷⁸ The divine goodness, justice, and truth are proved by showing that as God has infinite knowledge and wisdom, is self-existent, independent, and all-powerful, he can lack nothing and can be influenced by no wrong affection, and so must always act according to what he

⁷⁰ Harris, *Sermon*, vi, p. 11.

⁷¹ South, *op. cit.*, iv, 133-134.—Cf. the views of Archbishop King and Peter Browne as described by Hunt, *op. cit.*, iii, 126.

⁷² George Berkeley, *Alciphron: or, the Minute Philosopher* (London, 1732), p. 170.

⁷³ Clarke, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-42.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 44-47.

⁷⁵ But no other Body can be Self-Existent, because if so it would be individually the same, at the same time that it is supposed to be different.—*Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.

⁷⁸ As God's Works have been shown to be manifest Demonstrations of his Existence; so they are no less of his Perfections, particularly of his infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness; inasmuch as every Workman is known by his work.—Derham, *Astro-Theology*, p. 209.—Cf. Clarke, *op. cit.*, pp. 73 ff., 110, 113.

knows is best, that is, "according to the strictest Rules of Infinite Goodness, Justice, and Truth, and all other Moral Perfections."⁷⁹

It was also necessary to refute the dangerous atheistical doctrine that there is no eternal and fundamental difference between right and wrong and that such distinctions depend on man-made laws. The arguments to prove that morality has its basis in natural religion are directed against the atheists, but they frequently become involved in other efforts to prove the natural and essential connection between morality and religion both natural and revealed, and as such become arguments against the deists too. Indeed, in the defences of morality there is frequently no distinction made between atheism and deism, since to the orthodox the professors of either were likely to be equally immoral. And not only did the extreme view of Hobbes have to be refuted, but the extreme view of Shaftesbury, that virtue is its own reward, had to be disproved.

One method of refuting Hobbes was to show that there were things considered wrong not only because of the laws against them. Thus Tillotson writes:⁸⁰

Now the proper way of answering anything that is confidently asserted is to show the contrary; namely, that there are some things that have a natural evil and deformity in them, as perjury, perfidiousness, unrighteousness, and ingratitude, which are all things not only condemned by the positive laws and constitutions of particular nations and governments, but the general verdict of human nature.

Again it was argued that if men were, as Hobbes said, without a sense of right and wrong in the state of nature, and formulated the distinctions between them only after the social compact was made, no such compact could ever have been effected. Resting as such an agreement does on fidelity to one's word, and aiming as it does at the promotion of the general good, it presupposes the existence of such moral values prior to the formation of a social compact.⁸¹ Further proof of the natural distinctions between right and wrong are to be found in the natural fitness of things in the world which shows that "'tis undeniably more *Fit*, absolutely and in the Nature of the thing itself, that all men should endeavor to promote the *universal good and Welfare of All*,"⁸² in the judgment of conscience on past actions,⁸³ and in the judgment men pass on the actions of others.⁸⁴ At the basis of religion is this natural distinction between right and wrong.⁸⁵

⁷⁹ Clarke, *op. cit.*, pp. 114-117.

⁸⁰ Tillotson, *op. cit.*, I, 418.

⁸¹ Clarke, *op. cit.*, pp. 179-182.

⁸⁵ Harris, *Sermon VIII*, p. 4. Wollaston, *Religion of Nature Delineated* (L., 1726), p. 7.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 178.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 194-195.

Though the moral virtues of piety, righteousness, justice, equity, benevolence, sobriety, taught by the law of nature, do not depend on any future rewards and punishments, the doctrine of virtue as its own reward is not adequate to maintain the general practice of virtue in the world.

To serve God for his own sake and without any By-respects, is an Heroic Notion, and may be proper for the State of Heaven; . . . but to serve him here is a more refined piece of Piety than ever yet he was pleased to exact. God knows that while we carry this stubborn Clay about us, Hopes and Fears are the main springs that move our Soul.⁸⁶

For though Virtue is unquestionably worthy to be chosen for its own sake, even without any expectation of Reward; yet it does not follow that it is therefore entirely Self-sufficient, and able to support a man under all kinds of Sufferings, and even Death itself, for its own sake; without any prospect of future recompense.⁸⁷

Furthermore the doctrine of future rewards and punishments was defended by many because it was considered an excellent argument for immortality.

Against atheism mainly but also against certain forms of deism, the apologists defended the doctrine of a future life as one of the essential beliefs of Christianity and one of the most vital points in the religious controversies.⁸⁸ Of the various proofs which the orthodox thought could be produced, that from revelation was usually merely mentioned as not applicable in arguing with those who did not admit anything except from reason.⁸⁹ The widespread belief in immortality⁹⁰ and the general desire for it⁹¹ are cited as proofs. The immaterial nature of the soul further shows its immortality.⁹² The fact that in this world virtue goes unrewarded and vice unpunished suggests the necessity of a future life.⁹³

An attempt to find moral proofs for immortality is made by Bishop Gastrell. He argues that without a future life man is made to no purpose nor end. Believing that if it can be proved that the only possible purpose of human life is "to serve God here, in order to be happy in his Favour hereafter," the certainty of immortality will be proved, he sets out to

⁸⁶ Dean Edward Young, *Sermons on Several Occasions* (London, 1702, 2 vol.), I, 47.

⁸⁷ Clarke, *op. cit.*, p. 223. Cf. Butler, *The Analogy of Religion Natural and Revealed to the Constitution and Course of Nature*, ed. by J. H. Bernard (London, 1900), pp. 48-49. Gastrell, *A Moral Proof of the Certainty of a Future State*, pp. 94-95.

⁸⁸ Tillotson, *Sermons*, I, 330. Gastrell, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-2 (Preface), 75, 76, 99-100.

⁸⁹ South, *Sermons*, II, 17. Gastrell, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

⁹⁰ Tillotson, *op. cit.*, IV, 267-268. Gastrell, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

⁹¹ Clarke, *op. cit.*, pp. 271-272.

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 265-266. Gastrell, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

⁹³ Clarke, *op. cit.*, pp. 253-258. Wollaston, *op. cit.*, pp. 113-114.

establish this point from the nature of man and his condition here, from the unattainability of any other ends, and from the fact that without a future life all the common judgments of men in regard to their condition and conduct here are false.⁹⁴ The shortness and uncertainty and the troubles of life, the sense of guilt, the desire to live, the impossibility of realizing all the potentialities of man's nature, our notions of religion and virtue, are all turned to account in demonstrating a future life. To show the unattainable nature of any other ends, Gastrell points out that happiness is the end of life but that even virtuous living cannot assure it in this life. The common judgments of men that it is better to be than not to be, better to be guided by reason than by sense, that wisdom and knowledge are better than folly and ignorance, and that it is better to live in a state of society than a state of nature, are shown to be false without a future life, for in that case our bodies should be our chief care and the less we think about other things the better. Thus the doctrine of immortality alone solves the difficulties of the world and makes the nature of man intelligible.⁹⁵ And if this doctrine is accepted, a belief in Christianity will necessarily follow.⁹⁶

It was more difficult to demonstrate the truths of revelation by reason against the deists than to prove the principles of natural religion against the atheists. Tillotson had hesitated to attempt it.⁹⁷ Others were, however, convinced of the value of an effort to prove revealed religion as well as natural.⁹⁸ "Reveal's Religion will also gain the more Credit and Belief the more we examine and consider it."⁹⁹ One of the most elaborate defences of revealed religion is that by Samuel Clarke in his second series of Boyle lectures; and his arguments were used by other apologists, notably Butler. One method of proof is to show that though the obligations of natural religion and the certainty of future rewards and punishments may be deduced by reason, the majority of men are so led astray by the senses that they are not able to discover the truths of religion for themselves and so must be taught.¹⁰⁰ The teachings of the heathen world were so inadequate in reforming and guiding mankind, and their teachers were so ignorant of how God should be worshipped and how he might be reconciled to erring men, that a divine

⁹⁴ Gastrell, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5.

⁹⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 73.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

⁹⁷ He was therefore in great doubt, whether the surest means was to persuade the world to the belief of the sublime truths, that are contained in the Scriptures, concerning God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and concerning the person of Christ, was to enter much into the discussion of those mysteries. He fear'd, that an indiscreet insisting and descanting upon those points might do more harm than good.—Birch, *op. cit.*, p. 326.

⁹⁸ There are, however, more assertions of possibility of proof than attempts at proof.

⁹⁹ Benjamin Ibbot, *A Course of Sermons Preach'd in the Year 1714* (L., 1727), p. 77.

¹⁰⁰ Clarke, *op. cit.*, pp. 274-283.

revelation was required.¹⁰¹ Thus revelation is not contrary to reason. The deist objection to the lack of universality of revelation is answered by pointing out the inequalities of human capacity to learn the truths of natural religion.¹⁰² Christianity as the only religion in the world that can in reason be considered as divinely revealed and as teaching duties in harmony with natural religion is in all respects entirely "agreeable to right reason."¹⁰³ More direct proof of the Christian revelation is afforded by the miracles of Christ, the fulfilment of prophecy, and the testimony of the Apostles.¹⁰⁴

II

An examination of the apologetic aims and arguments of Edward Young in his *Night Thoughts* will show to what an extent he has expressed ideas and attitudes pointed out in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century defences of religion, and indicate that one reason for the great contemporary popularity of his poems may be found in the fact that he was giving poetical expression to the theories that were felt to be vital in the religious life of the time.

In his arguments against various shades of infidelity and immorality, Young adopts no very clearly formulated position. The various changes in Lorenzo show the opponents the poet has in mind from time to time. In *Nights I-III* Lorenzo is simply a libertine, enjoying life, its pleasures and follies, and thinking not at all of the necessity of preparing for death.¹⁰⁵ In *Night IV* he becomes a deist for the most part, depending entirely on reason¹⁰⁶ and not accepting Christian revelation.¹⁰⁷ Yet here too his rejection of immortality is evidently to be regarded as atheistical. In *Night V* he becomes an advocate of Shaftesbury's theory of ridicule,¹⁰⁸ at least as its enemies saw it.¹⁰⁹ In *Night VI* and *Night VII* he is an atheist in rejecting immortality and in seeing everything as a flux of essences.¹¹⁰ In *Night VIII* he is still a libertine, devoted to the world, and a deist in his denial of the inspired nature of the Bible.¹¹¹ In *Night IX* he is quite definitely an atheist, denying God,¹¹² believing the world the result of chance and fate,¹¹³ and unlike the deists unaffected by the evidences of natural religion.¹¹⁴

The greater part of the argument in the *Night Thoughts* is, then, directed against various aspects of what was at the time considered

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 283-308.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 318-320.

¹⁰³ Clarke, *op. cit.*, pp. 320-370.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 371-444.

¹⁰⁵ *Night I*, l. 320, *Night II*, ll. 45 ff.

¹⁰⁶ *Night IV*, ll. 728, 742.

¹⁰⁷ *Night IV*, l. 200.

¹⁰⁸ *Night V*, l. 81.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Berkeley, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-131.

¹¹⁰ *Night VII*, ll. 904-906.

¹¹¹ *Night VIII*, ll. 773-774.

¹¹² *Night IX*, ll. 836 ff., 957 ff., 1899.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, l. 1081.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, ll. 1643 ff.

atheism. Though in the preface to *Night VI* he asserts that it is no longer necessary to prove the existence of God as no one any longer doubts it,¹¹⁵ like all other apologists Young devotes some time to considering the proofs of a divine being afforded by reason and nature. The cosmological argument is developed in a somewhat Cartesian setting, and merged with the teleological.¹¹⁶ Lorenzo is told to withdraw from all contact with the outer world, and, relying entirely on reason and starting only with the assurance of his own being, to conclude from that that there must have been something eternal in order that anything could have existence. Then comes the question of what is eternal. First the human race and then the earth and planets are ruled out.¹¹⁷

What am I? and from whence?—I nothing know,
But that I am; and, since I am, conclude
Something eternal: had there e'er been nought,
Nought still had been; eternal there must be.—
But what eternal?—Why not human race?
And Adam's ancestors without an end?—
That's hard to be conceived; since every link
Of that long-chain'd succession is so frail;
Can every part depend, and not the whole?
Yet grant it true; new difficulties rise;
I'm still quite out at sea, nor see the shore.
Whence earth, and these bright orbs?—Eternal too?

Even granting matter eternal, the art and design in the stars imply a creator. Without one, matter either with or without innate motion could not produce the universe, for matter cannot have the powers of thinking and willing. Here there is a definite effort to prove Hobbes' theory absurd.¹¹⁸

Has matter more than motion? has it thought,
Judgment, and genius? is it deeply learn'd
In mathematics? has it framed such laws,
Which but to guess a Newton made immortal?—
If so, how each sage atom laughs at me,
Who think a clod inferior to a man!

The conclusion of such reasoning will be that there is a God.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ In the preface he writes: “. . . for, as to the being of a God, that is no longer disputed; but it is undisputed for this reason only, viz., because, where the least pretence to reason is admitted, it must for ever be indisputable; and of consequence no man can be betrayed into a dispute of that nature by vanity which has a principal share in animating our modern combatants against other articles of our belief.”

¹¹⁶ *Night IX*, ll. 1440–1505.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, ll. 1476–81.

¹¹⁷ *Night IX*, ll. 1448–59.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, ll. 1482–84.

If art to form, and counsel to conduct,
And that with greater far than human skill,
Resides not in each block,—a Godhead reigns.

Such a conclusion alone will solve all difficulties.¹²⁰

For the most part, however, Young relies on the usual teleological arguments, omitting the customary ones from the nature of man's body and the forms of animals. The arguments that appeal most to him and that offer possibilities of poetical development are drawn from the order and beauty in the inanimate parts of the universe. The usual evidence from the nature of the earth's surface is pointed out.¹²¹

Seas, rivers, mountains, forests, deserts, rocks,
The promontory's height, the depth profound
Of subterranean, excavated grots,
Black brow'd, and vaulted high, and yawning wide,
From nature's structure or the scoop of time;
If ample of dimension, vast of size,
E'en these an aggrandising impulse give;
Of solemn thought enthusiastic heights
E'en these infuse.

The minute wonders revealed by the microscope are mentioned.

Glasses (that revelation to the sight!)
Have they not led us in the deep disclose
Of fine-spun nature, exquisitely small,
And, though demonstrated, still ill-conceived?¹²²

Each flower, each leaf, with its small people swarm'd
(Those puny vouchers of Omnipotence),
To the first thought that asks, 'From whence?' declare
Their common source.¹²³

But the chief emphasis is on the evidence of the stars.¹²⁴

What order, beauty, motion, distance, size!
Concertion of design, how exquisite!
How complicate in their divine police!
Apt means, great ends, consent to general good!
Each attribute of these material gods,
So long (and that with specious pleas) adored,
A separate conquest gains o'er rebel thought,
And leads in triumph the whole mind of man.

The poet invites Lorenzo to take with him a "tour through nature's

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, ll. 1494–1501.

¹²¹ *Night IX*, ll. 907–915.

¹²² *Ibid.*, ll. 1576–79.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, ll. 2202–5.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, ll. 1422–29.

universal orb." After noting the characteristics of the atmosphere and the comets more briefly than is usual in such poetic tours,¹²⁵ Young points out the religious value of contemplating the stars.¹²⁶

This prospect vast, what is it? Weigh'd aright,
'Tis nature's system of divinity,
And every student of the night inspires.
'Tis elder scripture, writ by God's own hand:
Scripture authentic, uncorrupt by man.
.
.
.
What read we here? Th' existence of God?

To Young, contemporary astronomy was a subject of great imaginative appeal and of outstanding religious significance. A subscriber to Henry Pemberton's *A View of Sir Isaac Newton's Philosophy* (1728),¹²⁷ he became acquainted with the general principles, at least, of the Newtonian astronomy, and, like other apologetic writers, made such knowledge the basis for teleological argument. His astronomical details are definitely up to date. The earth is no longer regarded as the centre of the universe.¹²⁸

. . . This small nest
Stuck in a corner of the universe,
Wrapp'd up in fleecy clouds and fine-spun air.

The accounts of the "mathematic glories of the skies" with the myriads of stars showing by their harmonious movements the existence and attributes of God, recall both Newton's astronomy and his religious arguments.¹²⁹

Then mark
The mathematic glories of the skies,
In number, weight, and measure, all ordain'd.
.
.
.
Spirit alone can distance the career,
Orb above orb ascending without end!
Circle in circle, without end, enclosed!
.
.
.
Nor think thou seest a wild disorder here,
Through this illustrious chaos to the sight,
Arrangement neat and chastest order reign.

The poet's enthusiasm is kindled by the "confusion unconfused" and "the tumult untumultuous" of the heavenly bodies, and his wonder

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, ll. 619-635.

¹²⁶ *Night IX*, ll. 642-656.

¹²⁷ Herbert Drennon, *James Thomson and Newtonianism*, A Dissertation submitted . . . in candidacy for the degree of doctor of philosophy, University of Chicago (1928), p. 64.

¹²⁸ *Night IX*, ll. 138-140. Cf. *Ibid.*, ll. 1596-1600.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, ll. 1079 ff.

aroused by the fact that they are maintained in their positions without visible support. His explanation recalls Newton's theory that it is God who "actively prevents the fixed stars from collapsing in the middle of space."¹³⁰

Leaves so much wonder greater wonder still?
Where are the pillars that support the skies?
What more than Atlantean shoulder props
Th' incumbent load? what magic, what strange art,
In fluid air these pond'rous orbs sustains,
Who would not think them hung in golden chains?
And so they are; in the high will of Heaven,
Which fixes all; makes adamant of air,
Or air of adamant . . .¹³¹

The nocturnal "tour through nature's universal orb,"¹³² designed to convince Lorenzo of the existence of God through a contemplation of the glories of the stars, is full of echoes of Newtonian astronomy and reminiscent of many similar "tours" in early eighteenth century poetry.¹³³ The description of the influence of the moon on the purifying tides,¹³⁴ the mention of the visit to each planet and of Saturn's ring¹³⁵ are all details rendered familiar alike by such apologetic writings as Derham's *Astro-Theology* and such poems as Blackmore's *Creation*. The suggestion of the inhabitants of other worlds¹³⁶ may owe something at least indirectly to Fontenelle's *Pluralité des Mondes*.¹³⁷ While many of the astronomical details are given for the pleasure the poet has in contemplating them and the poetic effect to be obtained in developing them, the one apologetic purpose is to demonstrate the being and nature of God.¹³⁸

An undevout astronomer is mad.
True, all things speak a God; but in the small,
Men trace out him; in great, he seizes man.
The grand of nature is th' Almighty's oath,
In reason's court, to silence unbelief.¹³⁹

But miracles apart, who sees him not,
Nature's controller, author, guide, and end?
Who turns his eye on nature's midnight face,
But must inquire—"What hand behind the scene,

¹³⁰ Burt, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science*, p. 291.

¹³¹ *Night IX*, ll. 1134 ff.

¹³² *Ibid.*, ll. 597-1942.

¹³³ Cf. Blackmore, *Creation*, Reynolds, *A View of Death*, Glover, "Poem on Sir Isaac Newton," Mallet, *Excursion*, Ralph, *Night*, poems on Astronomy in *Gentleman's Mag.*, 1734.

¹³⁴ *Night IX*, 1197-1202.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, ll. 1606-11, 1750 ff.

¹³⁶ *Night IX*, ll. 772-774.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, ll. 1722-25.

¹³⁸ Cf. pp. 66, 98.

¹³⁹ *Night IX*, ll. 844-845.

What arm Almighty, put these wheeling globes
In motion, and wound up the vast machine?¹⁴⁰

The same material shows the divine attributes, which of course must be established in refuting atheism.¹⁴¹

How is night's sable mantle labour'd o'er,
How richly wrought with attributes divine!
What wisdom shines! what love!

While like other apologists Young admits the incomprehensible nature of God,¹⁴² he sees in the design and beauty in the universe evidence of his providence,¹⁴³ his infinity,¹⁴⁴ his omnipresence,¹⁴⁵ his power,¹⁴⁶ his goodness and mercy.¹⁴⁷

In general, especially in *Night IX*, Young attempts to refute atheism by establishing the truth of natural religion, mainly from the evidence of the stars.¹⁴⁸

Divine instructor! thy first volume, this,
For man's perusal; all in capitals!
In moon and stars (heaven's golden alphabet)
Emblased to seize the sight; who runs may read;
Who reads can understand. 'Tis unconfined
To Christian land or Jewry; fairly writ,
In language universal to mankind:
A language lofty to the learn'd: yet plain
To those that feed the flock or guide the plough
Or from the husk strike out the bounding grain.

The usual defence of the eternal difference between right and wrong is omitted except for one brief passage:¹⁴⁹

Such opposites eternal, steadfast, stern,
Such foes implacable, are good and ill;
Yet man, vain man, would mediate peace between them.

Other aspects of the contemporary discussions of morality are reflected. The necessary connection between religion and morality is insisted on. It is religion alone that enables man to live a life of virtue amid the difficulties of the world.¹⁵⁰

Religion's all. Descending from the skies,
To wretched man, the goddess in her left
Holds out this world, and, in her right, the next;
Religion! the sole voucher man is man;

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.* ll. 1271-76.

¹⁴¹ *Night IV*, ll. 385-387.

¹⁴² *Night IX*, ll. 830-833.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, l. 1510.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, l. 1520.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, l. 1587.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, l. 1932.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, ll. 2026-28.

¹⁴⁸ *Night IX*, ll. 1658-67.

¹⁴⁹ *Night VII*, ll. 1066-68.

¹⁵⁰ *Night IV*, ll. 550-562.

Supporter sole of man above himself;
 E'en in this night of frailty, change, and death,
 She gives the soul a soul that acts a god.
 Religion! providence! an after-state!
 Here is firm footing; here is solid rock!
 This can support us; all is sea besides;
 Sinks under us; bestorms, and then devours.
 His hand the good man fastens on the skies,
 And bids earth roll, nor feels her idle whirl.

True morality, though talked of by the friends of Lorenzo—here devoted to reason but whether atheist or deist is not clear—belongs with Christianity.¹⁵¹

Talk they of morals? O, thou bleeding love!
 Thou maker of new morals to mankind!
 The grand morality is love of thee.

Without a religious faith man cannot be virtuous.

. . . For want of faith,
 Down the steep precipice of wrong he slides;
 There's nothing to support him in the right.
 Faith in the future wanting is, at least
 In embryo, every weakness, every guilt;
 And strong temptation ripens it to birth.¹⁵²

Who tells me he denies his soul immortal,
 Whate'er his boast, has told me he's a knave.¹⁵³

Against Shaftesbury's theory of virtue as its own reward he uses the usual arguments. While virtue has some intrinsic value, it is not sufficiently in keeping with worldly interest to flourish without future rewards and punishments.¹⁵⁴

"Has virtue charms?"—I grant her heavenly fair;
 But if unportion'd, all will interest wed;
 Though that our admiration, this our choice.
 The virtues grow on immortality;
 That root destroy'd, they wither and expire.
 A deity believed will nought avail;
 Rewards and punishments make God adored;
 And hopes and fears give conscience all her power.

Man may find pleasure in doing good to others,¹⁵⁵ but on the whole, earthly rewards are insufficient to keep virtue alive.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, II, 781-783.

¹⁵² *Night* VII, II, 1150-55.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, II, 1179-80. Cf. *Night* VIII, I, 691.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, II, 1169-76.

¹⁵⁵ *Night* VIII, II, 707-708, 737-743.

¹⁵⁶ *Night* VII, I, 250.

On earth's poor pay our famish'd virtue dies.

Without a future reward man would be good in vain.¹⁵⁷

Since virtue's recompence is doubtful here,
If man dies wholly, well may he demand,
Why is man suffer'd to be good in vain?

There are a few efforts to prove immortality in the earlier *Nights*; for the most part the truth of the doctrine is there taken for granted and what proofs are offered are of the type used in the usual discussions of the moral value of contemplating death—proofs from revelation and from analogy. In *Night I* the activity of the mind even in sleep is taken to suggest its immaterial and hence its immortal nature.¹⁵⁸ The resurrection of Christ affords “the proof supreme of immortality,”¹⁵⁹ and by analogy nature teaches it, especially in the return of comets at regular periods.¹⁶⁰ But with *Night VI* the proof of immortality becomes the main purpose. The prefaces to *Night VI* and *Night VII*, which together are entitled “The Infidel Reclaimed. Containing the Nature, Proof, and Importance of Immortality,” announce definitely the purpose. In the first preface Young points out the excessive amount of contemporary discussion about religion and says that the whole dispute is based on the one question of immortality.

About four-fifths of *Night VI* is devoted to the nature and value of immortality and the folly of disbelief, and then against those “rank atheists” who doubt it, the evidence from nature is presented.¹⁶¹

What object, what event, the moon beneath,
But argues, or endears an after scene?
To reason proves, or weds it to desire?
All things proclaim it needful; some advance
One precious step beyond, and prove it sure.
A thousand arguments swarm round my pen,
From heaven, and earth, and man.

First, proofs from analogy, “analogy, man's surest guide below,”¹⁶² are given. The succession of days and nights, and the regular recurrence of the seasons suggest the continuous life of man.¹⁶³

Look nature through, 'tis revolution all;
All change, no death. Day follows night, and night
The dying day; stars rise, and set, and rise;
Earth takes th' example. See, the summer gay,
With her green chaplet and ambrosial flowers,

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, ll. 177–179. Cf. *Night VII*, ll. 716–718, *Night IX*, ll. 377–378.

¹⁵⁸ *Night I*, ll. 90 ff.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, ll. 703–716.

¹⁶² *Night VI*, l. 734.

¹⁵⁹ *Night IV*, ll. 270–271.

¹⁶¹ *Night VI*, ll. 650–656.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, ll. 678–689.

Droops into placid autumn; winter grey
 Horrid with frost and turbulent with storm,
 Blows autumn and his golden fruits away;
 Then melts into the spring: soft spring, with breath
 Favonian, from warm chambers of the south
 Recalls the first. All, to re-flourish, fades;
 As in a wheel, all sinks, to re-ascend:
 Emblems of man, who passes, not expires.

These arguments are entirely in line with the contemporary reliance on reasoning by analogy, and are much the same as the proofs by analogy advanced in the various popular treatises on death.¹⁶⁴

The next argument for immortality comes from the nature of matter. Matter is immortal: how much more truly must spirit be immortal?¹⁶⁵

The world of matter, with its various forms,
 All dies into new life. Life born from death
 Rolls the vast mass, and shall forever roll.
 No single atom, once in being, lost,
 With change of counsel charges the Most High.
 What hence infers Lorenzo? Can it be?
 Matter immortal? And shall spirit die?
 Above the nobler, shall less noble rise?
 Shall man alone, for whom all else revives,
 No resurrection know?

The chain of being, the "neat gradation" in nature, demands somewhere a being half of earth and half ethereal.¹⁶⁶

. . . grant the soul of man
 Eternal; or in man the series ends.
 Wide yawns the gap; connection is no more;
 Check'd reason halts . . .

¹⁶⁴ To see in Young's use of analogy and necessary influence of Butler's famous *Analogy* is probably erroneous. The particular analogies used by Butler are quite different as his argument involves a consideration of the whole constitution of nature. The theory of Thomas that Butler definitely influenced the ideas and method of Young (*Le Poète Edward Young*, p. 438) seems hardly tenable. The resemblances which the *Night Thoughts* bear to the *Analogy* are also resemblances to works published earlier. The great differences in material and treatment seem to exclude any influence. While chronologically such an influence would have been possible, there is no definite evidence that Young ever read the *Analogy*. The later great reputation of the book suggests that it should have been known to such persons as Young as the outstanding apologetic work of the day. But as a matter of fact its contemporary reputation does not appear to have been so great. The *Gentleman's Magazine*, where criticisms and discussions of the religious books of interest at the moment are given, lists only one book referring to the *Analogy* from the time of its appearance in 1736 until after the *Night Thoughts* were written, and in all that time the magazine prints not a single comment on it. ¹⁶⁶ *Night VI*, ll. 696-705. ¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, ll. 728-731.

The remaining argument of *Night VI* is based on a survey of the achievements of man in building and in controlling the forces of nature for his own ends, a survey which Young says necessitates the conclusion that those who could accomplish such things must be immortal beings.¹⁶⁷

Whose footsteps these?—Immortals have been here.
Could less than souls immortal this have done?

With *Night VII* he turns to human nature for proofs of a future life.¹⁶⁸

Who reads his bosom, reads immortal life;
Or, nature there, imposing on her sons,
Has written fables; man was made a lie.

Man's discontent supplies the first argument. The fact that man, no matter what his rank or degree of fortune, is discontented shows that conditions in this life are not suited to satisfy his nature. That neither his passions nor his higher powers can find what they seek suggests his immortal nature.¹⁶⁹

Why discontent for ever harbour'd there?
Incurable consumption of our peace!

.
Is it that things terrestrial can't content?

.
His grief is but his grandeur in disguise;
And discontent is immortality.

.
Our heads, our hearts, our passions, and our powers,
Speak the same language; call us to the skies.
Unripen'd these in this inclement clime,
Scarce rise above conjecture and mistake;
And for this land of trifles those too strong
Tumultuous rise, and tempest human life.

A comparison of the rapidity with which animal instinct develops and the slowness with which human reason matures shows great unfairness to man unless a future life is given in which he may complete his development.¹⁷⁰

Human hope, seeking future rather than present joy, always desiring something more, is unexplainable without a future life.¹⁷¹

His immortality alone can solve
The darkest of enigmas, human hope.

The idea of virtue is equally incomprehensible without immortality. “Virtue is true self-interest pursued.”¹⁷² But if man is mortal, self-in-

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, ll. 804–805.

¹⁶⁹ *Night VII*, ll. 29–68.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, ll. 104–105.

¹⁶⁸ *Night VII*, ll. 26–28.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, ll. 76–103.

¹⁷² *Night VII*, l. 142.

terest demands that he should seek happiness on earth. The usual conception of self-sacrifice for ideals and country as virtuous becomes utterly false without a future life, for such actions would be contrary to self-love, the basic command in life. Virtue is vain and meaningless without immortality.¹⁷³

The next two basic principles in man's nature, knowledge and love, both essential to the soul, also prove him immortal. The desire for these cannot be satisfied here on earth and without a future life man is rendered miserable by these "angel appetites."

This cannot be. To love and know, in man,
Is boundless appetite and boundless power;
And these demonstrate boundless objects too.
Objects, powers, appetites, heaven suits in all.¹⁷⁴

Unless immortality is granted, the whole order of nature must be inverted and man be inferior to the animals that are happy in the present and free from man's "doubts, fears, fruitless hopes, regrets, despairs."¹⁷⁵

The next proofs are drawn from "new unexpected witnesses," "ambition, pleasure, and the love of gain."¹⁷⁶ Ambition supplies a number of proofs: (1) man's shame in being detected in designs for praise from men;¹⁷⁷ (2) his desire to have his name remembered long after his death, a desire which would never have occurred to him had he not been immortal;¹⁷⁸ (3) his efforts to achieve earthly fame and his consequent realization of its emptiness;¹⁷⁹ (4) his desire for glory and praise;¹⁸⁰ (5) his search for virtue.¹⁸¹ Avarice, with its chief maxim "The wise and wealthy are the same," provides further argument. The maxim is true, but reason must show what constitutes real wealth.¹⁸²

Whence inextinguishable thirst of gain?
From inextinguishable life in man.

The love of pleasure affords similar proof. Shame in open indulgence in sensual joy shows that man is made for higher pleasures.¹⁸³ Thus immortality alone explains man's nature.¹⁸⁴

'Tis immortality deciphers man,
And opens all the myst'ries of his make.
Without it, half his instincts are a riddle:
Without it, all his virtues are a dream.
His very crimes attest his dignity;
His sateless thirst of pleasure, gold, and fame,
Declares him born for blessing infinite.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, ll. 139-252.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, ll. 275-278.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, l. 296.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, ll. 330-331.

¹⁷⁷ *Night VII*, ll. 341-352.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, ll. 353-364.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, ll. 365-378.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, ll. 379-427.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, ll. 328-443.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, ll. 467-468.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, ll. 477-500.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, ll. 507-513.

The next proof is drawn with Young’s usual delight in paradox from the Stoic denial of immortality as unacceptable to reason. He argues that in their doctrine of indifference to the pleasures and pains of sense they showed the “glorious instinct of a deathless soul” and thus “pleased pride proclaimed what reason disbelieved.”¹⁸⁵

Man’s wish for immortality and his thirst for happiness which cannot be satisfied here are further arguments, “for nature never gravitates to naught.”¹⁸⁶ The struggle between reason and inclination, man’s conscience and sense of guilt, suggest a future life.¹⁸⁷ Without immortality, God is cruel and in all this glorious universe has created man alone to be miserable.¹⁸⁸ Without immortality there is no meaning in the world.¹⁸⁹

All is delusion; nature is wrapt up
In tenfold night, from reason’s keenest eye:
There’s no consistence, meaning, plan, or end,
In all beneath the sun, in all above
(As far as man can penetrate), or heaven
Is an immense, inestimable prize;
Or all is nothing, or that prize is all.

Night VIII supplies no new arguments, but applies the proofs from ambition, avarice, and pleasure to demonstrating the advantages of a virtuous life. In his use of arguments from human nature, especially in his insistence on the evidence from man’s discontent and the unsuitability of the world to secure his happiness, and in the arguments drawn from ambition, avarice, and pleasure, which he has in mind in *Nights VI, VII, VIII*, and in his belief that without immortality human life has no purpose and meaning and that the real end of life is happiness through God and in a future life, Young is stressing arguments elaborated in much the same way by Bishop Gastrell in his *Moral Proofs of the Certainty of a Future State* (1725). This book was known to Young, for in the autumn before *Night VI* was published he was arranging to reborrow it.¹⁹⁰ Nor is the resemblance confined to the arguments used. Gastrell says in his preface that the essential and basic question in the religious controversies of the day is “whether there be any Future State appointed for Man.” If there is not, then, “we shall have no occasion to enquire any farther, and all the glorious things which have been spoken of Religion, Reason, and Truth will be wiped out and defaced.” On the other hand, if there is a future life, all religious difficulties will be solved. These statements are paralleled in the preface to *Night VI*.

¹⁸⁵ *Night VII*, ll. 559–600.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, ll. 609–612.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, ll. 626–631.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, ll. 693–703.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, ll. 1122–28.

¹⁹⁰ Henry Shelley, *The Life and Letters of Edward Young* (London, 1914), p. 167.

I think, it may be reduced to this simple question, Is man immortal, or is he not? If he is not, all our disputes are mere amusements, or trials of skill. In this case, truth, reason, religion, which give our discourses such pomp and solemnity, are (as will be shown) mere empty sound without any meaning in them . . . And this great fundamental truth, unestablished, or unawakened in the minds of men, is, I conceive, the real source and support of all our infidelity, how remote soever the particular objections advanced may seem to be from it. . . . and I am satisfied that men thoroughly convinced of their immortality are not far from being Christians.

Gastrell goes on to say that he will attempt the proof "in such a manner as no Free Thinker can object to." Young similarly announces that he will confine himself to "principles which infidels admit in common with believers."

At the close of his book Gastrell expresses the hope that infidels will not be prejudiced against his arguments merely because the writer "is one that believes in Revelation, though he has not taken his argument from thence," and reminds them that his doctrine is that "of Socrates, and of Plato, and Tully."¹⁹¹ In the conclusion of the preface to *Night VII* Young points out that the fact that the doctrine of immortality was accepted by Socrates should incline his opponents "to peruse the following pages with candour and impartiality, which is all I desire . . . for I am persuaded that an unprejudiced infidel must necessarily receive some advantageous impressions from them."

Young was apparently so impressed by the arguments of Gastrell, which he refers to as "new at least to me," that he based three of his *Nights* quite definitely on them. While as a general thing the *Night Thoughts* present ideas so current at the time that it is impossible to establish any specific sources, it seems evident that one source is to be found in this book by Gastrell.

Having exhausted the possibilities of the "moral proofs," Young turns in *Night IX* to contemporary science, especially astronomy, for new proofs. In *Night IX*, as has been shown, the order and harmony of the universe are used to prove the existence and attributes of God. Not content with the usual application of the argument from design, Young uses the same material to prove immortality.¹⁹²

And what may move Lorenzo's wonder more,
Eternity is written in the skies.
And whose eternity?—Lorenzo! thine;
Mankind's eternity.

The infinite space through which the myriads of stars move suggests

¹⁹¹ *Moral Proofs of the Certainty of a Future State*, p. 97.

¹⁹² *Night IX*, ll. 659–662.

infinite time and awakens in man the desire for eternal life, a desire which would never have been caused by nature if it were impossible of fulfilment.¹⁹³

The boundless space through which these rovers take
 Their restless roam, suggests the sister thought
 Of boundless time. Thus, by kind nature’s skill,
 To man unlabour’d, that important guest,
 Eternity, finds entrance at the sight:
 And an eternity for man ordain’d,
 Or these his destined midnight counsellors,
 The stars, had never whisper’d it to man.
 Nature informs, but ne’er insults, her sons.
 Could she then kindle the most ardent wish
 To disappoint it?—that is blasphemy.

This doctrine of immortality for all rational beings in the universe is in accordance with reason.¹⁹⁴

How easy sits this scheme on human hearts!
 It suits their make, it soothes their vast desires;
 Passion is pleased, and reason asks no more:
 ’Tis rational! ’tis great!

For the most part the arguments so far considered are directed against atheism and, drawn from reason and nature as they are, might be used by Christian or deist. The glowing accounts of natural religion in *Night IX* and the statement that the night sky is “elder scripture . . . Scripture authentic, uncorrupt by man”¹⁹⁵ and “scripture itself a fragment, that unread”¹⁹⁶ sound quite deistic. But Young is no deist. Indeed Lorenzo, chameleon-like in his shades of infidelity, becomes a deist occasionally and against him revealed religion is defended.

The chief accusations against deists which concern Young are that they misrepresent the Deity, deny revelation, and do not consider the Bible inspired. God is misrepresented because one of his attributes, mercy, is magnified at the expense of the others.¹⁹⁷

Not thus our infidels the eternal draw,
 A God all o’er, consummate, absolute,
 Full-orb’d, in his whole round of rays complete:
 They set at odds Heaven’s jarring attributes;
 And, with one excellence, another wound;
 Maim Heaven’s perfection, break its equal beams,
 Bid mercy triumph over—God himself,
 Undeified by the opprobrious praise.
 A God all mercy, is a God unjust.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, ll. 1173–83.

¹⁹⁵ *Night IX*, ll. 645–646.

¹⁹⁷ *Night IV*, ll. 225–233.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, ll. 2038–41.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, l. 1672.

This objection recalls Tillotson's similar attitude.¹⁹⁸

Do not consider God as mere power and sovereignty, as mere mercy and goodness, as mere justice and severity; but as all these together, and in such a measure and degree, as may make them consistent with one another. The greatest mistakes in religion have certainly sprung from this root, from separating the perfections of God, and considering them simply, and framing such wide and large notions of one, as to exclude another.

Gastrell points out the same misconception on the part of the deists, in making one of them express his conception of the deity.¹⁹⁹

I take him to be an easy merciful Being, that loves his Creatures, and requires no other Service from them than what is agreeable to their Nature and Inclination.

Butler also objects to making God all benevolence to the exclusion of his other attributes.²⁰⁰

Some men seem to think the only character of the author of Nature to be that of simple benevolence. This, considered as a principle of action and infinite in degree, is a disposition to produce the greatest possible happiness, without regard to persons' behaviour, otherwise than as such regard would produce higher degrees of it. And supposing this to be the only character of God, veracity and justice in Him would be nothing but benevolence conducted by wisdom. How surely this ought not to be asserted, unless it can be proved; for we should speak with cautious reverence upon such a subject.

In attempting to defend revelation against the deist objections, Young, like other apologists, finds arguments based on reason less applicable than in defending natural religion. He does not indeed resort to argument at all, but merely asserts and re-asserts with feeling and emotion that the teachings of revelation are true, that salvation is only through Christ,²⁰¹ and by the ardent recital of details of the Crucifixion and Resurrection,²⁰² of the miracles of the Old Testament,²⁰³ and the account of the Last Day,²⁰⁴ seeks to win the emotional support of his readers against deism. The inspired nature of the Bible is also defended merely by asserting its truth and abusing those who deny it.²⁰⁵

¹⁹⁸ Tillotson, *Sermons*, vi, 294.

¹⁹⁹ Gastrell, *The Principles of Deism*, p. 7.

²⁰⁰ Butler, *Analogy*, p. 47.

²⁰¹ *Night III*, l. 395, *Night IV*, ll. 676 ff.

²⁰² *Night IV*, ll. 236-300.

²⁰³ *Night VII*, ll. 1029-40, 1102-16, *Night IX*, ll. 127-132.

²⁰⁴ *Night IX*, ll. 135-366.

²⁰⁵ *Night VII*, ll. 1043-47.

For this,
That hallow'd page fools scoff at was inspired,
Of all these truths thrice venerable code!
Deists! perform your quarantine, and then
Fall prostrate ere you touch it, lest you die.

The concluding apostrophe to the Trinity shows a very definite acceptance of revealed Christianity and further opposes deism. The form of this conclusion is in keeping with similar addresses to the deity with which various apologetic poems end. It may also have been included with the intention of showing that in the great Trinitarian controversy of the period Young was on the side of orthodoxy.

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